Reconciling Through Relation with the Land: Creating New Imaginaries in Graduate Social Work Education

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ABSTRACT

In postsecondary graduate Social Work, teaching/learning about the colonization of Indigenous peoples of Canada, in information-based ways, offers a great deal of understanding to university students who are interested in reorienting themselves with their own familial histories as well as in experiences with Indigenous populations. However, fact-based teaching alone, is insufficient for students to feel implicated in these histories and for finding productive ways to fully engage the work of reconciliation with Indigenous populations.

In this oral paper presentation, we share our research data analysis, findings, and understandings from federally-funded research focused on educational practice related to current issues in Indigenous Social Work. We use a/r/tographic educational research methodology to investigate how art practice, research, and teaching, impact and affect one other for new insights and appreciations. We examine ways arts-based research, teaching, and learning, offer opportunity for implicating students more fully in the work of decolonization. Heavily influenced by author, Robin Kimmerer, we chose to use the land itself as one of the texts in this course. Many artistic practices/assignments we designed were based on work of Indigenous artists and made use of various land materials. We found that experimental practices of walking the land and working with land materials helped bridge art, professional practice, and everyday life, in ways that registered for students as shifts in understanding oneself with love and support which then became a responsive openness to offer others. If time permits, we will show a two-minute trailer of a film being made about this research.

Keywords: A/r/tography, Decolonization, Indigenous, Pedagogy, Reconciliation